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## MESSAGE

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Secretary, Department of Health

The outbreak of COVID-19 has placed extraordinary burdens upon the Philippines, especially in our healthcare system. In response to the crisis, the country implemented a whole-of-government, whole-of-society, and whole-of-system approach, with emphasis on quick response, resource management, and strategic communications through Prevent, Detect, Isolate, Treat, and Re-integrate (PDITR) Strategies.

The Department of Health (DOH) remains committed to providing science- and evidence-based responses to ensure the resiliency of our healthcare system, optimize the use of resources, and balance the health and economic needs of the country. The theme of this year's scientific meeting is very timely, as it reminds us that we should continue to build upon the learnings, experiences, and strategies from pandemics past and present, in order to prepare our systems and augment our capacity for the next.

We know that demand for quality health service will only grow; hence, we are called to relentlessly advance the state of medicine and science in the country. This year, we welcomed the development of COVID-19 vaccines as our latest weapon to combat this pandemic. While the DOH continues to assure the public that science guarantees the safety and effectiveness of our COVID-19 vaccines, we are still tackling the realities of vaccine hesitancy in the country head on. We invite everyone to take part in addressing vaccine hesitancy and communicating the value of vaccines in cutting transmission, protecting our health system, and saving lives.

Most of all, allow me to extend my sincerest gratitude to all the health professionals and healthcare workers, researchers, scientists, and individuals who continue to respond selflessly and whole-heartedly to the call of service even during the trying times. The DOH underscores that everyone has a role during the public health crisis. By dutifully and honestly fulfilling these roles, I am confident that we will endure, overcome, and heal as one. Let us all continue moving in one accord for the future of the Philippine public health, for an improved tomorrow of the Filipino nation.

Thank you very much.

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